

'In Touch'

The magazine of
Forest Gate Baptist Church, Blackpool.

Christmas 2017 Edition



A Message from Margaret

It's a privilege to wish you all a truly 'Happy Christmas', for 'Unto us a Son is given'. Son of God now Son of Man.

This son, who grew and lived an ordinary life, suddenly took a career turn to be a roaming preacher teacher and healer. This baby son, now a grown man, shook to the core all who heard him. But, to those who let Him touch not lonely their lives, but their minds and hearts, it was truly a life transforming experience.

That Son given to us is today still transforming lives, bringing us to God in forgiveness and reconciliation through His birth, life, death and resurrection for us.

Receive Christ into your home, your celebrations, your very lives this Christmas, and share this Son with everyone you meet.

A very blessed Christ-mas.

Margaret

A Million Good Wishes

This brings you a million good wishes and more
For the things you can't buy in a store-
A joy-filled heart and a happy smile,
Faith to sustain you in times of trial,
Contentment, inner peace and love –
All priceless gifts from God above!

ANNUAL REPORT
NOV 16-DEC17

We thank God for His faithfulness as we have grieved our Pastor Steve's passing. For God's comfort and encouragement as we have continued to work and worship whilst seeking God's will as we start to move forward

On Sunday 20th August 2017 we gave thanks for Steve's ministry and dedicated a new Remembrance Book and Table to him, the first anniversary of his death (21.8.16). We thank Edna Rawding for the Remembrance book.

Diaconate: The Diaconate continue to meet regularly once a month to pray and to deal with the regular business of the church, meeting extraordinarily as necessary this year, especially for ministry matters. Our thanks go to each deacon for their faithful hard work on the diaconate, and in the varying aspects of church life. A special thanks to Olive Brookes as leader of the deacons.

Membership: Membership stands at 32. One new member: Margaret Swires. One member left: Kate Towers. Our thanks to Kate who has served the church faithfully and still helps with DBS checking. We wish her and her family well.

Future Ministry: The diaconate prayerfully worked on the Vision and Profile of the church, which after the approval of the church was sent off to the NWBA/Ministerial Placement Committee. We are in the process of receiving names and continue to pray for the person who God has chosen to lead this church family, that they and the church be ready to recognize God's will.

Finance: Elizabeth, our Treasurer will give an update at the AGM. The Finance year ends on 31.12.17 and a full

finance statement will be given at a Church meeting when the accounts have been audited.

Fabric: Thanks to Alan and Andrew for seeing to general upkeep and repairs. They have kept things running smoothly even when contractors have caused delays. During the year Emergency lights have been replaced and two new boilers fitted.

Flowers: Our thanks to Janet and Gemma for the lovely flowers arrangements in the church each Sunday, many weeks in memory of loved ones. Thank you too to all who kindly give donations for the flowers.

Noticeheets/In Touch Magazine: Janet also prepares and prints these for which we are very grateful.

Worship: Our sincere thanks to Gill and Ann-Louise for the power point presentations, to Ian for the sound and to Edna on the piano.

Our thanks can go on continually, Communion attendants, Door Stewards, Coffee bar volunteers etc. Thanks you all so much.

Cleaner: The cleaner was officially replaced in October by Gemma and Andrew Summers after a three month trial period.

Training: As per BU guidelines all the deacons along with another six church members did level two safeguarding training.

FGBC: continues to meet every fifth Sunday with the Fylde Baptist churches, we participate with Layton Churches together, and we have voted as a church to be involved in the Lancashire Festival of Hope with Franklyn Graham next September.

Report: The Bible Study group is in recession for now, but the monthly Prayer corner after church, continue as we seek God's presence for ourselves the housebound, Blackpool and the wider world.

Report: Junior Church: Anthony and Chantelle resigned from Junior church at the beginning of the year, and we thank them for their many years of service. Liz Westhead and team continue to serve and work, and our thanks to them and our valiant member, Amelia.

Report Missions: The church continues to generously and prayerfully support the following organisations: BMS World Mission; Home Mission; Operation Agri; MAF; Compassion Samaritan's Purse; Christian Aid; Love Russia, BYFC. **Shoe Boxes:** Last year we made up 70 boxes thank you to everyone who participated. We continue collecting for this year.

Report: Tuesday Luncheon Club & Holiday at Home

Our TLC is held every third Tuesday in the month where we share fellowship with between 20 and 28 folk from various communities. We meet at 11-30 a.m. and finish around 2pm. Everyone shares in a quiz, a cuppa and a good natter before having a simple lunch of soup, sweet and tea or coffee for which we request a donation of £2.

We have been entertained by various speakers from very different walks of life, and have been able to support charities such as MAF, the Faith Mission, Aid for the starving and Christian Aid. People have been very generous in their giving, and any remaining donations are given to church funds and used for future development and evangelism.

Again this year we had another successful **Holiday at Home** opening the church for two full days from 10a.m. to 4p.m. where we held various activities, demonstrations, music from our guests and of course, food! On day three

we enjoyed a coach trip calling at Thornleigh for a meal, and then on to the Lakes.

As always, we sincerely thank you all as part of our church family for your devoted and continuous support asking that you keep us always in your prayers giving us the support and encouragement that we need to carry on the Lord's work. Thank you to a wonderful supportive group of helpers who are always willing to give their time and energy.

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! Psalm 33 v 1.

Report: Our ABC Toddler Group has been very popular again, particularly Mondays when there have been up to 15 children and babies attending with parents and grandparents. Lots of activities took place during the year including play dough, colouring, making gifts for Mothers and Fathers Days. At Christmas we had a party which included a visit from Santa. The children received books with the Christmas story told for their age group. In the summer we had a leaving party and said goodbye to two children leaving for school.

From September we haven't had many children attending on Fridays, some weeks there have been just 4. This may be due to some children getting extra nursery places.

We say goodbye to Maggie and thank her for her help, as she leaves to further her career.

Report: Messy Church

We have a good team of helpers who get involved with the children and parents as well as the preparation. Due to time restrictions with Weight Watchers who meet on a Wednesday evening, and also to numbers dropping, it was decided to change to a Saturday. The change unfortunately has not helped to increase numbers which fluctuate greatly.

Messy Church was held at Christmas and Easter, both showing the true meaning of these dates. Summer was

Fishers of Men and Halloween a light party with bags of Hope and Pumpkin Heroes. Thanks to all who help, and our thanks to Tracey for her help in providing ideas/materials.

Community Use of Building

Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Pilates, and for a few months Sweaty Mommas continue to use our premises. We thank Lindsay for co-ordinating the room lettings.

And to close: Margaret Swires, who has been helping the church since last November, was accepted to help in Leadership for three days a week in June, to be reviewed again in six months. Margaret has also been welcomed and accepted into membership here. Our sincere thanks are due to Margaret for her leading and guiding over the past year. Not only has she given us well prepared and meaningful Sunday Worship, she does pastoral visiting taking communion with those of the fellowship who are housebound or in care. Margaret has led the Prayer and Bible study group, and the deacons meetings. She supports all our events, helps out at ABC, TLC and Messy Church. We are sure you will have also noticed her washing up and stacking chairs etc. We do sincerely thank Margaret for everything she does and for the way she continually praises and encourages us.

We thank God for her and we thank Him for each person who makes up Forest Gate Baptist Church, those who work unseen, those working in teams, those who pray, those who give not only money but their talents and time. May God bless each one and lead us on to greater things for His Kingdom.

The Church Deacons

I Saw Three Ships

I saw three ships come sailing by,
Come sailing by, come sailing by,
I saw three ships come sailing by
On Christmas Day in the morning.

“What are these ships,” I hear you ask,
What is their mission, what their task?
What are their names, these vessels fair.”
On Christmas Day in the morning?

The first is FellowSHIP divine.
God comes to earth, your God and mine.
He shows his love in stable bare
On Christmas Day in the morning.

The second is not far behind
It's FriendSHIP of the deepest kind
God one of us a man becomes,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Now passing me the last of all
Is WorSHIP at an oxen stall
Come give to Him your life, you all,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Adapted by John Harris

HOLLY

We sing about the “Holly and the Ivy” and prickly green leaves and red berries are everywhere in Christmas decorations.

In Scandinavian countries the holly is even known as the “Christ-thorn” and it seems that the name of the holly actually came from the word “holy”.

The holly reminds us of the death of Jesus – the sharp prickles on the leaves are like the crown on thorns that Jesus was forced to wear on the cross. The red berries remind us of the drops of blood that came where the thorns hurt his head.

Holly is an evergreen, which means that it does not lose its leaves in the Autumn, but keeps them all year round. and because its leaves are always green it is a symbol of eternal life.

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Live With Joy

Only what we give away enriches us from day to day,
For not in getting but in giving is found the lasting joy of living.

For no-one ever had a part in sharing treasures of the Heart who did not feel the impact of the magic mystery of God’s love.

Helen Steiner Rice

**An Article by Mrs. Marjorie Boyd who worshipped
At Whitegate Drive and Forest Gate for many years.**

I left Blackpool three and a half years ago to be nearer my son John and family, they live in Bearsted. Kent, the nearest I could get was in the village of Barming, both near Maidstone. It is only 20 minutes on the motorway from John. I have a lovely bungalow in a close. There are just 10 with a warden's house, secluded off a country road. My bungalow is nice and compact with a small garden outside the patio door. The lady warden is lovely and comes in twice a week to see if we want anything, or we can just phone her.

It was a big wrench having been born in Layton, Blackpool in 1931 and never moved out of the area, but I have settled very well, my neighbours are very nice and friendly and 3 of us get out every Monday on a local bus to one of the small towns or garden centres. The lady next door is a local girl so she is the one who takes us out or has us and it is nice to have lunch out. The warden also takes us out or has us for coffee once a month.

It is also great to be near the family rather than 360 miles away. My son John is in the Salvation Army now, having been baptised at Whitegate Drive, so that is where I go now on a Sunday.

I am thoroughly enjoying it here with friends, neighbours and family. I wish I had done it years ago instead of being on my own for 20 years.

I send my best wishes to all who remember me.

Marjorie Boyd

The Wonder of it All

It just swept over me, the wonder of it all
That in the person of His Son
God came to the poor world undone in such humility.
With Mary on her ass to ride
And faithful Joseph by her side
They made their way to Bethlehem
But found no shelter at the inn
And no-one else could take them in.

So in a stable he was born
The Christ of God that wondrous morn
Amidst the cattle and the hay.
As in his mother's arms he lay
In such simplicity.
And in the babe that day began
The great unfolding of God's plan
Of full salvation brought to man
At such a cost and what a price
Was paid by God's great sacrifice
At Calvary.

Continuing still that plan unfolds
Until one day the story's told
When Jesus Christ appears again
In glorious majesty to reign,
With hearts and voices we exclaim
"All glory be to his great name!"
The wonder of it all,
The sheer wonder of it all.

Mary G. Topham

This comes from Daily Bible reading book
'Light for our path'

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! Two pregnant women – what were people to think? After all one wasn't even married, although she was engaged. As for the other, surely she was past it? And were people really expected to believe all this stuff about angels? Wishful thinking if you ask me!

Neither Mary nor Elizabeth can possibly have foreseen what God had in mind for them. Mary was engaged to be married in a society which took faithfulness very seriously, and Elizabeth, like Sarah so many years earlier was infertile and at least middle aged. How could God fulfil His purposes through them? Yet, this was what was to happen ... one miracle serves to confirm the other. Small wonder Mary left Nazareth and made the long journey to Judea to see her cousin for herself. And Elizabeth for her part recognizes in Mary one who has been chosen by God.

We should note that in this almost surreal situation, the reaction of each woman is to burst into praise!

God can, and does use the most unlikely people and circumstances to bring new things to birth among His people. Blessed are those indeed who believe this.

When we experience peace with God, we can share His Peace with others.

Past Memories of Whitegate Drive and Forest Gate Churches by Mr. Jim Carter, a former member of the church

My first memories of the church are during the Second World War in the 1940s. Peter Blacow invited me to a Wednesday evening social in the church schoolroom. One of the games was to cut a slice of a large cake formed from a mound of flour with a ring perched on top. Whosoever caused the pile of flour to disintegrate had to fish the ring out of the heap of flour with their mouth, to the great merriment of everyone else. As the victim I was consoled by being given a bar of chocolate.

As I felt some sense of obligation perhaps, and a very friendly atmosphere I joined the Youth Group where Doug and Kath Pemberton (nee Hawkins) in particular made me very welcome. Other members at the time included Eric Shore, Joan and Brenda Pearson (daughters of the Minister) Raymond and Celia Elliot, Marion Ellis, Sheila Goodall, Maureen Tenant, Herbert Briggs and Peter Martin.

The church was thriving at the time under the pastorate of Rev. Roland Pearson (Joan and Brenda's father) and there were flourishing groups of Men's and Ladies' Fellowships, Missionary Society Committee and choir. All the groups organized Wednesday evening events, socials, beetle drives, concerts etc.

Mr. Pearson was a caring, dedicated minister and pastor and he baptised me into membership and I taught in the Sunday school which at the time had over 200 attendees.

The annual summer outing involved 6 to 8 coaches full of children and helpers and the Sunday School Anniversary involved erecting tiered seating at the front of the church to accommodate all the children. Sheila Goodall introduced Kath Mills to the group by bringing her to our

Christmas carol night when we went round to various church members and friends' homes. I'd introduced Gordon Johnson to the group by then and since his voice is nearly as bad as mine, our job was to carry the lanterns. Kath and I fell in love and we were married by Mr. Pearson over 61 years ago.

The old church was of unusual design for a Baptist church as the pulpit was off centre and the inside corner of an area which was the choir chancel with choir stalls and organ. The Parkinson Brothers, founders of the large building firm, Sir Lindsay Parkinson, had been supporters of the church and I always assumed it was their influence that had played a major part in this plan.

It was well situated (except for the underground water problem) and impressive with its flight of white stone steps leading up to the main entrance. Many visitors would come to Stanley Park on the tram to Whitegate Drive. They could not miss the church and quite a number attended the church during their regular annual Blackpool holiday. This was also due to Mr. Crossley who was always on duty to welcome visitors and members. He was a warm, but impressive person rather like my image of Mr. Pickwick. He stood at the top of the stairs in a blue suit, white winged collar and a head of pure white hair with a quaff. In my teens I was asked to assist him on occasions and I will never forget him saying to me in a quiet spell that he felt he had very little skills to offer God (his wife was a very talented choir mistress) so he tried to be as good a greeter as he could be. "I smile them in and I smile them out" he said. Returning holiday visitors used to look forward again to meeting him.

Many people played important roles in the church but perhaps I should mention Alf and Frank Ashworth, brothers who married two sisters Helen and Margaret, who between them served in many different ways.

Mr. Pearson moved on to a fresh pastorate in Southport and was succeeded by Bert Alcock. He was very energetic and enthusiastic and a key supporter of the Boys Brigade. At his prompting and enthusiasm he encouraged Harry, Gordon and myself to start a Boys Brigade company with myself as captain and Harry and Gordon as officers.

At the time the Lancashire and Cheshire Area of the Boys Brigade had a very efficient, full-time organiser who was also a Baptist ordained minister. One of his items of strong advice was that each meeting night one of its officers should go round and visit the homes of any missing boys. This turned out to be quite effective but as Harry was our pianist the evenings when he was missing meant that the opening hymn at each meeting had to be Fight the Good Fight hammered out badly by one or at most two fingers by the one boy who had pretensions to play the piano but that one hymn was the extent of his repertoire. As Gordon and I would never win any cups for singing it was fortunate that what it lacked in tunefulness was made up for by enthusiasm.

The company prospered, Harry had been a drill corporal in the RAF and as a result we won some drill competitions. Mr. Alcock's East Anglian connections meant that he was able to arrange annual summer camps in the Lowestoft area and the Norfolk Broads. Some mothers and helpers accompanied us so it was a little convoy of mini buses that made the rather lengthy cross country journey. On one trip when we were in the wilds of the countryside the ladies needed a comfort stop so we stopped by a field. The ladies eagerly jumped out and through the hedge to the field beyond. It was only half light by this time and they returned in some discomfort as it turned out the field was full of nettles.

Mr. Alcock's enthusiasm did run away with him once when it was a baptism service and he had started filling the baptistry too soon. Shortly before the service he realized it was too full but the chain to the drain plug was

in the baptistry so he leapt in to pull the chain and soaked himself thoroughly. He deputed Harry to start the service while he dashed home to change.

However his enthusiasm had many fortunate results. At the time in summer in the late forties and the fifties, Blackpool was the show business capital of the U.K. with more artists and musicians than just about any other locality. He became pastor to this world of show business and amongst other results I remember him having debate or discussion on Christianity with Charlie Chester and also a very big event when Ruby Murray chose to be married in our church.

A few Christmas jokes for children:

Q. What do Santa's elves learn in school?

A. The Elfabet.

Q. What breakfast cereal does Frosty the Snowman eat?

A. Snowflakes

Q. What do you call a cat sitting on the beach on Christmas Eve?

A. Sandy Claws.

Q. Where does the snowman hide his money?

A. In the snow bank.

From Advent Readings 2017

If we walk in the light as God himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7 (NRSV)

At the end of our Christmas Eve service, each person lights the candle of the next person in the pew, symbolically sharing the light of Christ. It is a moving sight when each person holds a glowing candle in the darkened church. Last Christmas Eve, as I watched the light being passed, my candle was nearly extinguished by melted wax that collected around the wick. When I noticed this, I tilted my candle to let the melted wax run down the candle toward the holder and once again, the flame burned brightly.

It occurred to me that the pooling wax could represent the attitudes that can keep us from reflecting the light of Christ to others. Later, I made a mental list of some things that can block this light: ingratitude; worry and negative thoughts, not forgiving ourselves or others, being judgemental, focusing on material possessions and worrying about what others think of us. What is the remedy? We can start by focusing on loving God rather than on the things and opinions of the world. We can be grateful for and trust in God's love, give and accept forgiveness and love others unconditionally. In these ways we can get rid of excessive 'wax' and let the light of Christ shine through us.

Thought for the day: What is keeping me from shining the light of Christ to others?

A Christmas Prayer

Gracious God,
We thank you for the glorious message of this season:
The glad tidings of great joy,
Ever old yet ever new
We thank you for the faith of Mary,
The commitment of Joseph,
The message of the angels
And the response of the shepherds –
The way you changed their lives that day in Bethlehem.
Above all though,
We thank you that you have changed our lives too;
That the good news these heard and responded to long
ago is news still today –
As special now as then,
And for us as much as anyone!
Teach us never to forget that wonderful truth;
Never to overlook the fact that you have come to us in
Christ Jesus your son.
May that knowledge burn brightly in our hearts,
A constant source of joy and inspiration,
Whatever life may bring.
In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.

CAN YOU HELP? Our A.B.C. Toddler Group need to shampoo two carpets. Has anyone got a carpet shampooer we could borrow please. If so could you please speak to Liz Westhead. Thanks!

Love Russia

The Moses Crisis Centre **St. Petersburg**

Women battling addiction or found sleeping rough would ordinarily lose their children to state care with no chance of a reunion. Pregnant women would be deprived of parental rights at the point of birth. This centre allows women who can no longer manage, to stay with their children while receiving refuge and rehab.

The centre is currently exceeding capacity. 17 families are crammed in with mums sharing bunk-beds with 1 or more children – non-compliant with government standards for care facilities. Healthy baby Nikita was recently born to one of the mums during her programme of recovery at the centre. We were also delighted to hear about Vika, a long-term resident-turned-helper on the rehab programme at the centre, who recently married and is moving on to pastures new – we wish her every happiness.

Last summer, Love Russia paid for one room to be constructed in the half-finished building located in the grounds of the Crisis centre, but there are four more to do. At present it is an open shell. The aim is to do as much as possible. Volunteers will work alongside helpers from the on site church and the men's rehab facility next door.

If you would like to know more about the work of Love Russia, please speak to Edna or go to www.loverussia.org.

Christmas at Forest Gate

Sunday 17th December at 10.45 a.m.

Sing Christmas special service with favourite carols

Monday 18th December

A.B.C. Toddler Group Christmas Party from 9.30 – 11.30 a.m. with a special visit from Santa

Tuesday 19th December from 11.30 a.m.

Tuesday Luncheon Club Buffet and Fellowship with Christmas entertainment

Sunday 24th December 10.45 a.m.

Christmas Communion

Sunday 24th December 6.30 p.m.

Carols by Candlelight service followed by hot drinks and warm mince pies

Sunday 25th December 10.45 a.m.

Christmas Morning service

You are all warmly invited to the above and

**WE TRUST YOU HAVE A HAPPY AND
BLESSED CHRISTMAS**